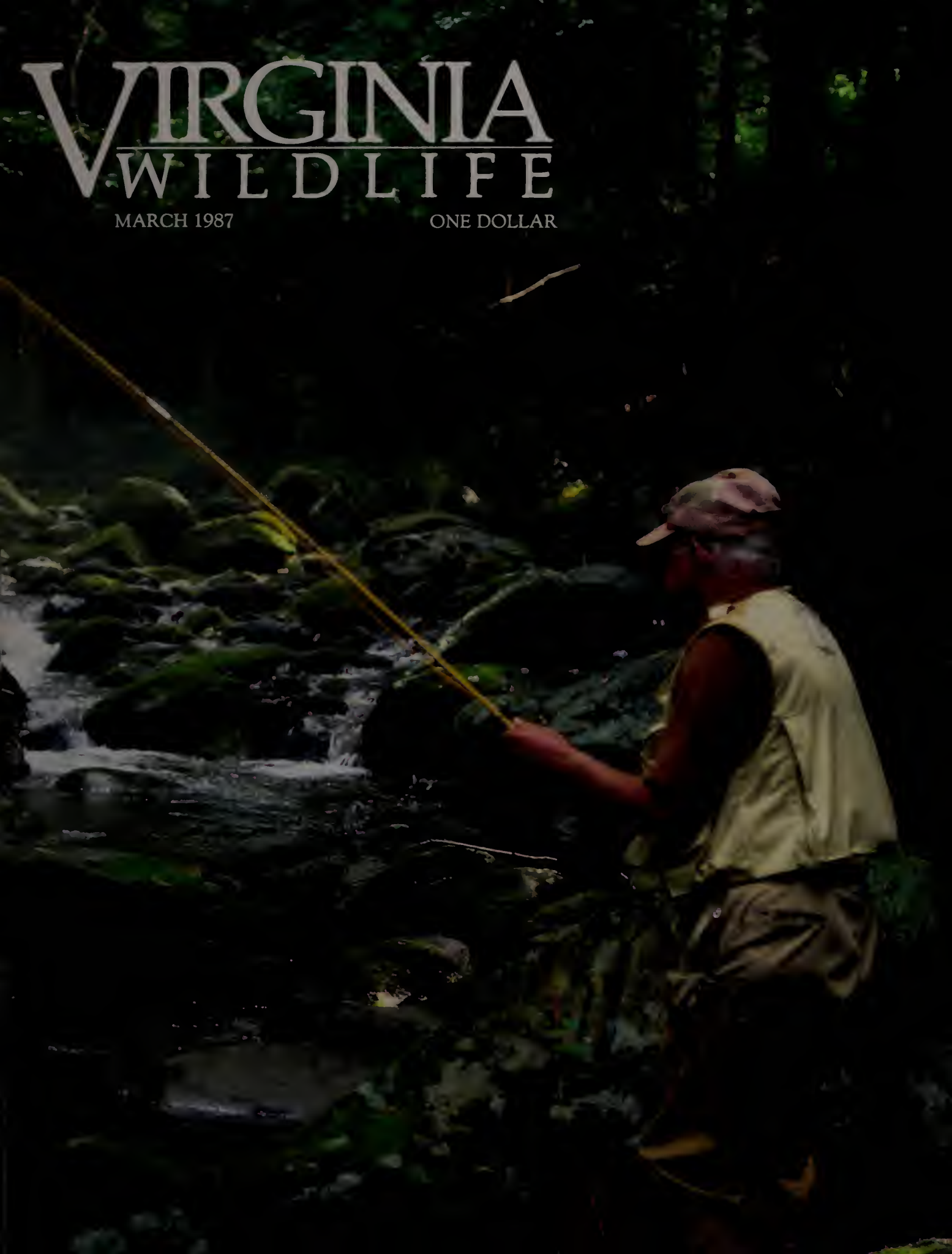


# VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

MARCH 1987

ONE DOLLAR



# VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

*"Years from now waterfowl hunters will look back and wonder what the debate and conflict over steel shot was all about . . . Once the dust has settled and the recriminations have ended, steel shot proponents will be looked to and recognized as conservationists who were bold enough to speak out for the resource."*—J. Scott Feierabend, Wildlife Resource Specialist, National Wildlife Federation, June 1985.

I'd like to write something about the last hunting season, about some cold mornings and wet feet and friends hunkered down in a duck blind. But something's holding me back. I think the turnout at the last Commission meeting where steel shot was a main issue on the floor has something to do with it. There were some real balkers there, duck hunters who simply opposed the conversion from lead to steel shot that the federal government is imposing on Virginia next waterfowl season in the Tidewater area.

So, I went back to the literature, thinking that maybe these men whom I knew would spend their entire lives on a marsh in muck up to their thighs if given half a chance knew something I didn't know about steel shot, and had some kind of valid conservation argument why we shouldn't convert.

Well, what I found in the literature made me feel kind of sick. It made me realize that like most other conservation issues, we've sinned by dragging our feet. Lead poisoning from lead shot in waterfowl has been documented for the last 100 years. In Virginia, lead poisoning has been documented at least since the 1920's. For the past 30 years, research has been ongoing to assess just how much damage has been done to waterfowl from lead shot, and more studies than most anyone would care to look at have been conducted to make absolutely sure that lead shot does poison waterfowl in significant numbers. The studies investigated the effects of lead shot on different species, at different times of the year, the effects of food habits, substrates, age, and amount and length of time the lead remains in the gizzard. The sublethal effects of lead ingested shot have been studied, both in wild and pen-raised waterfowl. And all these studies point to one dismal failure on the part of duck hunters: we should have given up lead shot long ago if we really cared about waterfowl.

Granted, steel shot has not always been the feasible alternative. Until recently, steel shot has been known to ruin gun barrels, cripple birds, and to be ballistically inferior to lead shot. But not anymore. Now, it's nothing more than selfishness to refuse to switch.

Yes, steel shot costs a little bit more, but not much. I called a local sporting goods store last week and heard the straight dope. A box of 2¾" 12 ga. 6's in steel costs \$15.95. Now, you can't tell me that the cost of steel is going to break you. And, contrary to popular opinion, steel shot can be reloaded. Steel shot is not going to damage your gun barrel unless you use your grandfather's old double barrel or side-by-side. And, to my way of thinking, there has never been a more noble excuse for buying a new shotgun. Heck, you might get two shotguns out of that argument if you play your cards right with your wife.

Admittedly, steel shot does shoot differently than lead. The shot is less dense, loses velocity faster, and has a shorter shot string than a comparable lead load. But that doesn't mean you can't learn how to use it. And use it effectively. Go ahead. Read all the studies that have been done on crippling losses from steel shot versus lead. And when you're finished, I'd be surprised if you would bet money that steel shot cripples more game than lead. Nobody can prove that it does or it doesn't, which makes the score even.

But, to me, the duck hunter shouldn't have to be convinced of all this. The duck hunter shouldn't have to be coddled into buying more expensive shells, learning how to shoot better, or taking the right gun into the field. Perhaps some two-bit citified developer might have to be convinced. Somebody who has never been lucky enough to drag on some hip waders at 4 in the morning and watch a sunrise on a marsh light up some well-placed decoys. But the fact that spent lead shot can kill those mallards that are coming back, swinging a circle around your blind ought to be enough for a duck hunter.

That's why I can't write about the past hunting season just yet. The memories have been tarnished by the thought that a lot of duck hunters who were up at the same deadly hour of the morning as I was this year, and watched the same sun rise over their favorite marsh, will give up duck hunting before they'll switch to steel—even if it means they get caught shooting lead next year. It's hard to believe they could be so uncaring about the resource they profess to love.

*Wesley England*



# March Issue

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Wildlife and Related Natural Resources

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Gerald L. Baliles, Governor

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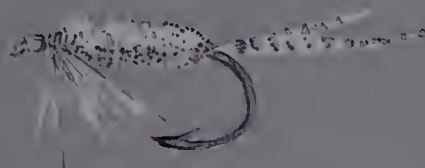
Trout fishing opens up again in the Commonwealth on Saturday, March 21; photo by Harry Murray.





# Dry Flies

## Why Fish Anything Else?



*Trout fishermen can fish dry flies all year round on Virginia's streams. Harry Murray tells you how to do it.*

*story and photo by Harry Murray*

Virginia has some of the finest dry fly-fishing for trout to be found in the country. It is so good, in fact, that many anglers will fish for them no other way, with few exceptions.

Looking back through 20 years of stream notes reveals the reason this type of quality fishing exists. By late March our water temperatures are warm enough to encourage the trout to feed actively. And, my stream diary reveals another fact which is even more significant—our aquatic insects start emerging this time of the year.

By examining some of these insects, the artificial flies which match them, and the tactics used to fish them, you will be able to take advantage of this outstanding action.

The first mayfly to hatch on our streams is the Quill Gordon (*Epeorus pleuralis*). This tannish-gray insect is a little less than one-half inch long and is well-matched with the standard Quill

Gordon dry fly on a size 14 hook. This artificial fly will take a lot of fish, but since many of our streams are quite high early in the season, we often have trouble keeping this delicate fly floating. For this reason, many anglers are switching over to the Mr. Rapidan dry fly in a size 14 for this hatch. I developed this fly about 10 years ago with three goals in mind. I wanted a fly which matched our early mayflies well. I also wanted good floating qualities with high angler visibility. Mr. Rapidan fills all of these requirements quite well, and although I'm not sure I agree with them, many anglers use this fly exclusively for the first month of the season.

Streams such as the Conway River in Shenandoah National Park and Laurel Fork in Highland County have excellent hatches of Quill Gordons and by covering the primary feeding stations in the lower portions of the pools with these dries, it is often possible to

take a good fish from almost every pool.

The Dark Blue Quill (*Paraleptophlebia adoptiva*) is our next fly to hatch. It usually peaks about the second week of April which overlaps the Quill Gordons. Even though it is only a size 18, making it about half the size of the Quill Gordon, the trout will often switch over to this little mayfly due to their thick concentrations on the stream. One day last spring these flies were so thick on the stream side rocks that I had to carefully watch myself to avoid stepping on them.

These Blue Quills are not very good escape artists. I have often seen dozens of them trapped half in and half out of their nymph cases, riding around and around in back eddies. It will sometimes take these flies two to three minutes to become airborne. The trout are very much aware of the vulnerability of these flies, and often the largest fish in the pool will pull out into these eddies and suck in flies for hours.

In order to take advantage of these eddy feeders, you must spot either the trout or his riseform as he takes a fly. It is impossible to pinpoint this type feeding station consistently. Fortunately, many of these trout will rise every minute or so, making it easier to locate them than one might think. However, even though the rest of the stream may be moving very fast, the back eddies are often shallow and the currents are very slow. This results in a very spooky situation and you will often get only one cast. So, read the setup as carefully as you can before making your cast—you will catch him or spook him. No one ever said this game was fair.

The March Brown (*Stenonema vicarium*) is our next fly to put in an appearance, and its big size 12 body will often excite every fish in the stream. The two favorite imitations of this fly are the American March Brown and Art Flick's March Brown, both in size 12.

Last year we had more of these flies on our streams than I had ever seen before. Their large numbers and manner of hatching caused the trout to forget all caution to feed upon them. The nymphs of this fly live in mid-



stream in fairly fast water until shortly before it is time to split their nymph shuck and hatch. At this time, they move out to the side of the streams into water only several inches deep. Normally, no self-respecting trout would be found in this shallow water, but all those groceries are just too much to pass up.

I have seen the shallows in the Bull Pasture River so thick with these nymphs that it looked like there would not be enough rocks for them to hide under.

A good way to fish this hatch, when the flies are thick, is to study the shallow sides of each pool carefully before wading in. You will seldom see the delicate riseform which the trout produced as he sucked in the Little Blue Quills; rather, you will see almost a slashing action in the water as the trout move to take every March Brown they can locate.

The delicate rises may exist but they will be present when the hatch has thinned out several weeks later. Look for these in the long flat shallow tails of the pools where the trout can see the naturals drifting for a long distance.

By the first part of May, most of our March Browns have finished hatching, but their close cousins the Gray Fox (*Stenonema fuscum*) and the Light Cahill (*Stenonema canadense*) are on the way. These mayflies are well matched with artificial dry flies we know by the same names as the naturals. Both are about a size 14. Although their mannerisms are much like those of the March Browns, we are often required to make some alterations in our fishing tactics. By early May, our streams are dropping rapidly and we are compelled to approach each pool more cautiously

than we did a month earlier. Long casts and finer leaders are often required to make a reasonable showing. Don't worry, we're not out of the water yet; in fact, it is still possible to fish some of the small headwater streams like Benson's Run, west of Staunton, with good success, but I would not count on these tiny feeders to provide action much later in the season.

Overlapping the Gray Fox and the Light Cahill is our much loved Sulfur mayfly (*Ephemerella dorothea*) which starts about mid-May. My favorite imitation of this fly is Ed Shenk's delicate version of Charlie Fox's Sulfur Spinner in sizes 16 and 18. Don't let the name throw you. We use this to match both the freshly hatching duns and the imagos returning to mate and lay eggs. It's simply an outstanding pattern.

This fly is present on our mountain streams, our spring creeks and our tailwater fisheries. It creates much excitement, both for the trout and the anglers, because the fly's body is large enough and the hatch is thick enough to bring up our largest trout. I'll never forget the day I cast a number 16 Sulfur to what appeared to be a normal riseform on the Smith River close to Bassett only to have a giant brown trout rip off my whole fly line and 150 feet of backing and break me off when the last run of backing hit against the empty reel spool. I'd just like to know how big that fish was.

The Sulfur duns start hatching about two hours before dark and continue the rest of the evening. It is possible to simply fish the water, covering all good feeding stations, but I prefer to locate individual rising fish and work on them. If high spring waters have not killed our nymphs, there will usually be enough adult flies that fishing to rising trout is the most productive tactic; it certainly is the most fun.

A good way to work to the risers is to approach each stretch of water from downstream very cautiously; stop and examine the stream surface carefully for about one or two minutes. Pick out the closest riser and crawl into casting position. Easy does it; if your approach was anything less than perfect you may



have telegraphed your presence to the trout—either spooking him or making him extremely cautious in his feeding.

In order to compensate for this, I like to wait until the trout has taken three or four natural flies before making my presentation. This pause also enables us to determine a feeding rhythm. If he is coming up about every 30 seconds, I like to hold my cast until he is about due, and drop my fly two feet above him. It is best to locate a casting position that allows you to present flies to trout at a slight angle. This prevents the line and leader from drifting over the fish before the fly gets to him. This sounds simple, but at times we are all guilty of being in such a hurry to get our flies to the fish that we don't take the time to select the proper casting position; thus, we "leader" the fish and put him down or at least make him very cautious and therefore hard to outsmart. Smart? I hate to think about how much time I've spent trying to outsmart a creature with an IQ of 6.

The Sulfur Spinners return to the stream to mate and lay eggs the last half hour or so of daylight and get thicker on the water as the light gets lower. This is fantastic fishing with lots of big trout coming up, but the darkness is a problem. In order to compensate for this, I always like to pick a part of the stream which will enable me to fish into the western sunset. I can usually squeeze in an extra 15 to 20 minutes of fishing this way. The easiest way to achieve this is to either fish from the east bank toward the west bank or to fish into a western turning stream elbow.

The Sulfurs are the last of our dependable mayfly hatches until fall, but fortunately the Little Yellow Stone Flies (*Isoperla bilineata*) continue all summer. The density of this hatch varies considerably due to the nymph's habitat. Many make their homes in submerged leaves, and periods of high water, as we experienced in November of 1985, destroy large numbers of them. Fortunately, they come back quickly and a year or two of normal stream conditions will enable the survivors to repopulate the entire drainage quite well.



The natural Little Yellow Stone Fly is well-matched with a size 16 Blond Goofus and a size 18 Mr. Rapidan. I fish these two flies all summer long in our mountain streams, but since the streams are low and I am compelled to use 6x leaders, I generally use the smaller of the two.

Aquatic insects are not the only food items we should try to match with our dry flies. During the summer, terrestrial insects become an important part of the trout's diet.

Black ants and cinnamon ants are present along all of our streams. I like to use either dry Fur Ants or McMurray Ants in sizes 14 to 20 to match both of these insects. If I spot a rising trout I will usually go to the smaller sizes, but if I am just fishing the water I'll use a size 14 or 16 Crowe Beetle. This fly is much easier to see on the water, and it passes for a broad variety of natural beetles.

Crickets and grasshoppers are also important foods for summer trout. Ed Shenk's Black Cricket in size 12, 14, and 16 and Dave's Hopper in sizes 10, 12, and 14 are excellent imitations of these insects. These flies produce best when fished close to grassy banks where the naturals are found. Pasture field meadows along streams like Big Stony Creek west of Edinburg and the Jackson River, south of Monterey are ideal areas for these flies.

As fall approaches, we can expect some surface fishing to Little Olives (*Baetis vagans*) and Tiny Olives (*Pseudocloeon*). These flies are thickest in streams with good spring water inputs, but more of our streams possess fishable hatches than most anglers realize. The small size of the flies—18 for the *Baetis* and 24 for the Tiny Olives—

cause them to go undetected by some anglers. However, they do not escape the attention of the trout. Last November I had seven trout rising within casting distance of me in one pool on a small stream.

On occasion, these trout can be both selective and spooky. Thus, it may be necessary to match the naturals very accurately and to crawl into casting position. I once put down five surface feeders in a row on 100 feet of a stream before I got into casting position and I was on my hands and knees.

The primary requirements for tackle in dry fly-fishing in Virginia are delicacy and accuracy. I do not use any outfits requiring lines heavier than a size 4 for this type fishing, and I drop down to a 2 weight outfit for low water conditions in late summer.

Last summer I switched over to several 2 weight fly rods for this type fishing and was impressed with the delicate way they presented the fly under these low water conditions. I'm sure I caught more trout with these delicate outfits than I would have with conventional tackle. At the present time Scott is building three rods for 2 weight lines and Orvis is building two.

Seven or 7½-foot rods are good in the mountains but 8 to 9-foot rods provide better line control on open streams. Lightweight single action fly reels with delicate drags are by far the most popular models today. Fly lines can be either double taper or weight forward styles as long as they have a delicate front taper. Leaders should be eight to 10 feet long and tapered down to 4x to 7x depending on the fly size.

The most important aspect to remember in summer trout fishing is to use a cautious approach. Yes, I mean crawling into casting position. A good Eastern trout fisherman should wear out the knees of his waders before he does the soles.

By observing the natural insects along our streams and matching them with the correct fly, I think you will see why many of us prefer this style trout fishing on Virginia's waters. □

Harry Murray is a frequent contributor and among other pursuits, he teaches fishing and fly tying in Edinburg, Virginia.





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by Jeff Curtis

# Horsefarm Turkeys

Spring turkey hunting can  
give you memories not only of  
birds and lost sleep, but of friends  
as well.

**A**t 4:30 in the morning, the slice of moon is yellow-white, stars are shining and he's already outside doing morning chores. "Go run the water in the three tubs for the cows," he tells me as he walks down the drive from the horse barn. "I'll check to see how the foal's doing and meet you inside for coffee." That's his way of saying good morning.

I needed a flashlight to run the tubs full. That done, I grabbed my clothes and headed inside where the coffee's poured and his pipe smoke layers the kitchen air.

"How you feeling this morning?" he smiles at me from the far side of his pipe.

illustration by Cindie Brunner

"All right, I got a good night's sleep. I was tired last night though."

"Tired!" he snaps back. I knew it was coming. "You've never been tired yet, boy."

"I know. Where we going this morning?"

"Ha!" He lights his pipe. "Reckon we ought to try behind Ray's? Heard that turkey gobble the other night. Plenty of turkeys back there."

I agreed. After a few minutes behind the coffee cups, he decides I need to chalk up his cedar box call and change the rubber bands on the lid. The call is over 20 years old and more precious to me than the Belgium A-5 he carries each morning.

I followed his green farm pickup down a freshly graveled road in my own truck. This has turned into habit the past few days. He needs to leave the woods earlier than I do to finish feeding livestock and supervise the hired hands. I'll stay behind an hour longer. So, taking both trucks allows each of us the pleasure of a guaranteed ride back to the house for breakfast.

He's standing beside his truck smiling at me. This old gentleman, 70 years plus, loves the mornings. I've never known anybody like him. So ready to praise the fresh air and snap me into place.

We're walking a dry, leafy hunting road that leads through the woods to a small, stony river. I'm quiet. He's walking like the whole woods is awaiting his grand arrival with an unlit pipe in his mouth and that damned, squawking box call in his pocket.

"You know, if you'd hold your hand on that thing we might get to hear one gobble this morning." I almost plead.

"Don't worry, they can't hear us." He refuses to be instructed.

I notice that the squawking has stopped though. At the end of the road, leaning the shotguns against a large white oak, we stand stock still and listen to the morning arrive.

Here's where I think he and I are the closest. These few moments, without hardly a handful of words being spoken, back to back in the farside of an enormous hardwood river bottom, are genuine.

We're some 40 years separated in age, and yet I think I must be like he was 40 years ago, and I hope I'll be like he is 40 years from now. And, he sees

"He'll go off by himself, hand in his canvas coat pocket holding his call quiet, leaving me to myself."

himself in me. He's never said so, at least not in such plain words, but you can tell. He knows I know.

A mourning dove down in the darker parts of the river bottom calls a couple of times. Somebody who didn't know any better could mistake the dove's call for an owl. A woodpecker gives some decaying pine tree a good rattling.

"Gobbbbbbbble-obble-obble."

We both tightened up. But this one turns out to be one of those noncommittal, one-gobble-for-the-day birds. Nothing moved him to gobble again. Across the river and on the topside of the far hill, another sounds off.

"Come on, let's see if that log still goes across to the other side."

"No, you go ahead," he says. I'll stay here in case one comes on this side." He knows that what's going to happen is going to happen across the river, but I've never gotten him to stay with me for more than the predawn listening. He'll go off by himself, hand in his canvas coat pocket holding his call quiet, leaving me to myself. Each morning that we hunt together he introduces me to the whole world that lays before and around his farm, and then wills it all to my own benefit as he disappears into the morning's fading darkness. All that lays before me in the dawn is mine. Respect for property lines comes shortly after sunrise.

I found the log and got across. Plenty of birds gobbled that morning. But not one seemed interested in a female. I counted no less than five, two of which were in working range, but they just seemed to graze around the woods, gobbling when they felt like it and sounding off a 100 yards in a different direction.

When I turned in the driveway, he was leading a horse past the gigantic magnolia tree out to the big barn.

"I heard them gobbling up there with you," he said. "What'd you do?"


"Nothing," I shrugged. "They acted like they weren't interested a bit."

"Your breakfast is inside. Tomorrow we'll get right over that tree and up onto that hill. You'll get him tomorrow. You'll be over in the morning won't you?"

I cleaned up and ate the breakfast he'd set aside on the stove. He went back to his farm chores; I drove to my office in town. □

*Jeff Curtis is the wildlife education coordinator for the Game Commission and an avid hunter.*





# Nowhere to Run, Nowhere to Hide

Humans like to “clean up” their backyards and farms of trailing vines and mangy-looking briar patches. But when we take the garden shears out or start up the plow, we’re tearing down some prime residential space for wildlife.

by Jerry Via



Birds find refuge in thick cover from the elements and predators. Cardinal resting on a branch; photo by Dave Catlin. **Inset:** A flock of sparrows camouflaged in brush; photo by Jerry Via.

**P**lease don't fling me in that briar patch" entreated Brer Rabbit to his captor, Brer Fox in Joel Chandler Harris' famous story. The simple wisdom of this story is that the rabbit really wanted to be in that briar patch. The same preference is true for many of our birds. In particular, the showy cardinal is very much at home in the most unseemly of places, a brushy thicket. Humans have a hard time accepting this paradox because we live in an ordered world complete with trash pick-up, neatly trimmed hedges and evenly mowed lawns. It is somehow hard to imagine how wildlife can exist in such a disorderly habitat. Most people look at thickets, overgrown with tangled mats of greenbriar, honeysuckle, blackberry and poison ivy with the same disdain reserved for the steamy jungle. But, at least a jungle has some sense of enchantment and allure.

Nonetheless, what is seemingly an eyesore to people is in reality a Shangri-la for birds. As people attempt to "clean up" these unsightly areas, they remove much of the important cover which birds require.

Dense foliage and thickets provide an answer to many of the everyday mysteries of bird life. For example, where do birds go when it rains? Where do birds escape from the wind? Where do birds hide from predators? During the summer, the search for cover is relatively simple, since most plants are covered with an umbrella of leafy growth. However, winter offers little refuge in the plants that shed their leaves in autumn. The remaining cover consists of tangled vines and shrubs, evergreens (pines, cedars, spruces), and a variety of evergreen ornamental shrubs.

Birds retreat to these areas for the protection from the elements. Did you ever wonder why you don't see birds taking a shower in a downpour? Like ourselves, birds are warm-blooded and must constantly fight to conserve their



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**Right:** Clean farming leaves birds and other small mammals with nowhere to run and nowhere to hide; photo by Jerry Via. **Opposite:** Thick growth provides a sanctuary for wildlife in the winter, like this holly bush provides for the cedar waxwing; photo by Jerry Via.





heat in a hostile world. Feathers provide a very warm, lightweight insulation coat, but despite the proverbial "water off a duck's back," most birds are not completely waterproof, and must seek the relative safety of densely matted branches to avoid a soaking. Lightweight feathers are easily blown about by stormy winds. As a result, the skin is exposed and birds lose their precious warmth and become chilled. Cold or sick birds "fluff-up" their feathers, close their eyes and crouch motionless in these natural windbreaks as they try to conserve their remaining body heat. Without the appropriate cover, many birds, especially the smaller birds, would die from the elements. For example, a single large raindrop from a thunderstorm is sufficient to kill a hummingbird caught in the open without cover.

Protected areas are especially important to birds when they are sleeping. During sleep, the body temperature of most birds drops to its lowest levels and body heat conservation is more critical. Among the most maligned of all areas in Virginia are old fields invaded by red cedars in the mountains and white cedars along the coastal plain. Few birds use these trees during the daytime because there are few insects, and only specialized birds eat the berries. However, at night, these trees are the high-rise hotels of fields and pastures. Shaking one of these trees results in a clamor of fluttering wings accompanied by the indignant scolding of an angry mockingbird, or the harsh chirps of fleeing sparrows. In more urban areas, ornamental shrubbery offers an important haven for birds because of the added heat coming out from adjacent homes and buildings.

Predators are often foiled as birds retreat to dense cover. An experienced quail and grouse hunter knows the true meaning of "a bird in the hand is worth

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*Evergreens are particularly good winter roosts for wildlife because they keep their leaves all year round, providing shelter and a protected refuge; photos by Jerry Via.*







two in the bush," especially if he has pursued his game into a thicket. Not only do the many branches obscure his prey, but underlying vines shackle his feet and ankles. Wounded or sick birds also seek the dense cover of such areas in a desperate attempt for survival. The many feathers and skeletons found in these areas indicate that thickets and tangles are the hospices of the bird world. On a more positive note, it is in the relative safety of these same foliage and thickets that most birds begin their life as nestlings, safe from predators and the elements.

Brushy stands of multiflora rose, native blueberries, and plantings of autumn olive and ornamental hollies offer important nourishment for birds feeding under the protection of their branches. During warmer months, these shrubs also provide many insects for hungry birds. Many seeds are provided by our weeds and native shrubs typically associated with thickets. In this maze of thin branches, a host of sparrows and finches find food and shelter during the winter months.

The absence of safe cover may be the reason that many urban bird feeders lack visitors, since birds are often wary of leaving their protected areas to feed at exposed feeders. The risk is somewhat like putting a restaurant in the middle of a battlefield. The lack of sufficient cover is also the most likely reason for the reduced population of bobwhite quail throughout much of Virginia. This valuable game bird is very resilient to hunting, but intolerant of neatly manicured fence rows and fields cleared of brush piles that is characteristic of modern agriculture. Studies have shown that when sufficient cover is replaced, bobwhite quickly return.

The next time you drive through Virginia and you see thickets of honeysuckle, weedy fields, cedar stands or dense stands of scrub pine, remember that these areas are important for bird survival. While we may not fully appreciate the importance of these "waste" areas, also remember that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. □

*Jerry Via is an assistant professor of biology at VPI & SU and president of the Virginia Society of Ornithology.*

# A Sporting History: Chincoteague

by Curtis Badger

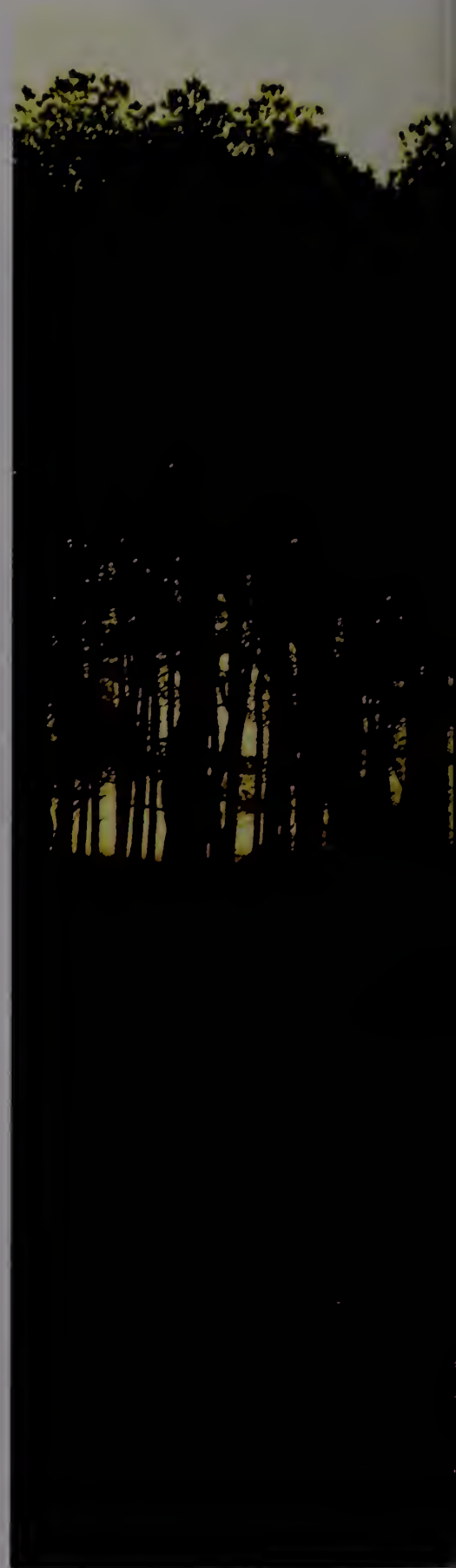


In the past 20 years, the Eastern Shore village of Chincoteague has been transformed from a sleepy fishing community to a nerve-jangling tourist town. The corner waterman's cafe' has been joined by gourmet restaurants catering to vacationers from Washington. Downtown shops sell carved ducks, Chincoteague T-shirts, and plastic ponies that are replicas of the famous Misty of Chincoteague, the horse that made the island famous.

Delbert "Cigar" Daisey lives on the eastern side of Chincoteague in a place called Piney Island, which is about as far removed from the gourmet restaurants and plastic Mistys as you can get without leaving town. Cigar's backyard slopes down to the marsh, and a narrow creek snakes through the grass and forms the eastern boundary of Cigar's property. Fronting the marsh is a weathered frame workshop, Cigar's decoy carving shed, that overlooks the spiraling creek and the flat, expansive marsh.

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**Inset:** "Cigar" Daisey at work in his shop in Chincoteague; photo by Curtis Badger.  
**Right:** Chincoteague; photo by Bill Portlock.









It's quite a view. It's late fall and the morning light makes the golden grasses shimmer. The marsh is laced by meandering tidal drains, and shallow ponds are mirror-smooth and reflect the blue sky. In a few weeks, black ducks will be on the ponds. Across the marsh is Assateague Island, and the lighthouse stands stalwart on a slight rise, high above the tops of the pine trees.

From Cigar's carving shop the scene is nearly timeless. It could be 1940, and young Delbert could be going out to check his traps before school. Time doesn't matter here. The marsh has been here for centuries, and even the lighthouse predates 1900.

The only hint that something is amiss is the narrow ribbon of road far to the north, the causeway that links Chincoteague with the Assateague Island ocean beach that attracts hundreds of thousands of people a year. On warm days the traffic on the beach road shimmers in the heat like a desert mirage, an endless caravan of sun worshippers drawn like moths to the light at the end of the world.

The causeway is barely visible from Cigar's shop; it's like a beautiful photograph of a wilderness landscape marred by the presence of a gum wrapper that eluded the attention of the photographer. It is a subtle signal that all is not as it appears.

Cigar was born and raised not far from here, and in the days when Chincoteague was a working waterman's town he made a living from the marsh. "People here were poor in those days. We hunted, fished and trapped. We did what we could to get by."

Getting by often meant that the islanders were at odds with those who made and enforced state and federal game laws. Cigar readily admits breaking the law, a fact that he regrets, but offers no apology for. "I broke every law of God and man. We didn't have any money, and trapping ducks was all

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*Northern shoveler (Anas clypeata) at Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge; photo by Bill Portlock.*





we knew. It was a tradition passed down from the days when it was legal. People here weren't bad, it was just a way of life. They were hard working people. You never saw anybody on welfare."

Cigar began helping his family financially when he was in the sixth grade by running duck traps before school, and during the summer he would catch fish and clams for the market. By the time he was in his teens, he knew the marsh as well as anyone, and in the winter he would hire on as a guide at a local sporting club. During bluebird days Cigar would get out the hatchet and rasp and rough out a few decoys for the club's working rig, and although he did not realize it at the time, it was this experience that would shape his life.

"Decoy-making was a dollar-and-a-half deal back then. I made 1,100 one year, probably 14-15,000 in my lifetime, mainly hunting decoys or reproductions of old shorebird decoys."

Decoy-making was a sideline to market hunting until the early 1960s when a growing market for his decoys and stricter penalties for game law violations helped Cigar recognize that crime does not pay.

"I trapped for more than 20 years. There were at least 20 other people here on the island doing it at the same time, including one preacher. We never shipped ducks anywhere, we sold them locally. Judges, lawyers and doctors were some of my best customers. The laws got tougher in the early sixties, so I spent more time carving decoys. It was less dangerous than trapping ducks and easier than crabbing."

It was during his trapping career that Cigar earned his nickname. "I enjoyed trying to outfox the wardens, and if I'd shoot some ducks illegally I'd leave a cigar butt behind. That was my calling card. I'm on good terms with the fish and wildlife people now though."

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*Marbled godwit (Limosa fedoa) at Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge; photo by Bill Portlock.*







Mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*) at Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge; photo by Bill Portlock.

It is ironic that, considering his youthful excesses, Cigar is one of the most outspoken conservationists on the island. The man who once ignored game laws and taunted the enforcement system was speaking recently of the need for stronger laws to protect Virginia's vulnerable coastal wetlands and the Chesapeake Bay. While development has helped the Chincoteague area economically, Cigar sees the proliferation of motels and fast food emporiums as a threat to the traditions and culture of the island. "Chincoteague used to be the nicest place on earth. It was a Garden of Eden. That bridge to Assateague is the worst thing that ever happened to this island. All anybody thinks about now is money. We were better off when the island was poor. Everybody knew everybody, and a man could make a living right here in the marsh. Now all the seafood is brought in from Maryland."

Cigar is seen by many local residents as a living part of the Chincoteague tradition, a reminder of a way of life that is quickly becoming history. No one, Cigar included, believes it is possible to stem the tide of development on Chincoteague, to revert to the values and lifestyles of those post-Depression subsistence days. And Cigar has inadvertently become one of the island's most notable resources. His graceful hand-carved decoys are considered among the best in contemporary wildfowl art, and collectors from all over the country seek him out. On many days, especially during the tourist season, out-of-state cars will roll up the shell driveway, bringing collectors or fellow carvers who want to meet the man who has become something of a legend.

And Cigar will always invite them in, offer them something cold to drink, and tell them what life was like on Chincoteague before they built the bridge, when people were poorer but life was somehow richer. □

*Curtis Badger is director of publications for the Wildlife Art Museum of the Ward Foundation in Maryland and is a frequent contributor to Virginia Wildlife.*





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# Is it a Keeper?

*Fish regulations can be perplexing if you aren't briefed on what they are designed to do. Thus, the authors explain the good biological sense behind the new slot limits for bass in the state.*

*by Bill Neal and Bruce Ingram*

**H**ave you ever fished all day, caught 100, or more, largemouth or smallmouth bass, and gone home completely dissatisfied because all of your fish were runts? How about the times you have fished for hours and caught no fish? I've had such experiences in the Old Dominion and they make me want to take up a new sport! Anyone for tennis?

The Game Commission is trying to eradicate such experiences from fishing in the Commonwealth and that's exactly why its bass regulations occupy seven paragraphs in the State Fishing Regulations Summary. All the state's waters are not created equally and regulations which may solve problems in some waters may actually make matters worse in others. To solve the problem, the Commission is applying needed regulations on individual waters, like the 14-2 rule, 14 and 12-inch size limits, 12-15 inch and 11-14 inch slot limits, and no size limits at all.

Before we can understand the various regulations, we must understand the word *recruitment* as used by fisheries people. Adult fish spawn, their eggs hatch, and the young fish are *recruited* into the population. Fishermen gener-

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ally are satisfied when they catch and can harvest the fish they are seeking in size ranges and numbers satisfactory to them. Satisfaction tends to be in the minds of individual fishermen, but continuous catches of small to medium size fish, low numbers of fish or substitutes for their target species, seldom create satisfaction. Both high and low recruitments to populations have exactly the same effects on user satisfaction because both tend to limit the

numbers of fish available for harvest. However the two problems have opposite effects on populations so they must be attacked via different regulatory practices.

Fisheries biologists recommend minimum size limits on fish when recruitment is low. They are trying to protect youngsters and adults in populations which are reproducing slowly. Slot limits are recommended when recruitment is too high. Biologists are trying to reduce the numbers of youngsters in a population while protecting the most effective spawners. In the first situation, relatively low overall population numbers are producing poor fishing. In the second case, very high numbers of fish are competing for limited food and cover. Thus, they are growing very slowly and reaching old age before they reach the sizes fishermen wish to harvest.

Examples of such poor growth may be found in the history of Lake Chesdin and more recently in the Shenandoah and New Rivers. In all three situations, a 12-inch minimum size limit combined with high recruitment to cause the problems.

During the 1970s, fishermen were

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*Opposite: photo by Doug Stamm.*

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very critical of the Lake Chesdin largemouth bass fishery. They could, on a typical fishing day, catch 150 or more bass 9-11 inches long, but one "keeper" per day was the exception rather than the rule. Careful examination of the fishery indicated bass were growing very slowly and the 9-11 inch bass fishermen were catching were adults three to four years old. A slot limit protects the fish in some pre-determined size range (i.e. 12-15 inches inclusive) while making all the fish below and above the slot fair game to people who wish to harvest them. The Commission applied a 12-15 inch slot limit to the largemouth bass population in Lake Chesdin in 1979. Fishermen cooperated by harvesting large numbers of 9, 10 and 11-inch bass. Presto! Today, Lake Chesdin supports one of the state's best largemouth bass

population.


The New and Shenandoah Rivers presently support smallmouth populations whose characteristics generally parallel the Lake Chesdin problem. Fishermen can catch hundreds of 9 to 11 inch bass per day from either system, but legally harvestable 12-inch fish are rarities. Population analyses have indicated smallmouth bass in both systems take four to five years to grow past the 12-inch legal size limit. Thus, high recruitment equals slow growth. So, on January 1, 1987, a 11-14 inch slot limit went into effect in both rivers.

Different size slots are used on largemouth and smallmouth populations because the fishes grow at different rates and reach different adult sizes. With fishermen support, the Commission believes the new limits will cause

restructuring of the smallmouth populations in both river systems. Of course such modification will take time, but if such change occurs sometime in the next four to five years, we may be bragging about some of the best smallmouth fisheries in the East.

A 12-15 inch slot limit is also in effect on the Lake Anna largemouth bass fishery and a 11-14 inch slot is enforced on the James River. Both of these regulations are preventative, and, in a sense, somewhat experimental. Lake Anna, located between Washington D.C. and Richmond, Va. has gained fame for its ability to produce eight-pound-plus largemouth bass. The James has a similar reputation for producing citation smallmouth bass. However, when fishermen harvest large numbers of adult fish, carrying capacity (the water's ability to support fish





“... regulations must always remain flexible and open to change.”

*Left and below: Smallmouth bass are one of the species benefitted by slot limits under certain situations; photos by Gregory Scott.*

in pounds per acre) often comes into play, and reduces the overall population to large numbers of relatively young (and small) fish. Analyses of the Lake Anna situation conducted in 1983 indicated the lake fishery was converting to a population composed mainly of 12-inch long or less, largemouth bass. Similar, though less stringent, analyses indicated the James River fishery was also converting to the “small fish” scenario. The Commission believes that with cooperation from users, the slot limits now in effect on both waters will provide the protection needed to assure their continued big fish reputations.

Other size limits applied to specific waters include the 14-2 rule in effect at Buggs Island, Gaston, Smith Mountain and Leesville lakes; a 14-inch minimum size limit in Occoquan Reservoir; and a 12-inch minimum size limit in Beaverdam, Chickahominy, Claytor, Flannagan, Moomaw, Philpott, and North Fork Pound reservoirs.

All such regulations are designed to protect populations which exhibit relatively low reproductive capabilities. The 14-2 rule states that all bass in any daily creel must be 14 inches or more long except two fish in any such creel may be any size. Such rules are attempts to allow beginning fishermen who may not be able to capture big fish opportunities to take limited numbers of fish. The rule is experimental but results to date appear satisfactory.

Now a note of caution regarding regulations in general and creel or bag limits in particular. The Commission adopts regulatory measures to address problems which exist at specific times, but biological populations continually change in reaction to changing habitat and/or population structures. For instance, a 14-inch size limit creates population conditions which may favor survival of fish less than 14 inches long. Slot limits favor the fishes within the slots (i.e. 11"-14" and 12"-15"). Under such conditions, regulations must always remain flexible and open to change. □

*Bruce Ingram is the Virginia editor for Outdoor Life magazine and a frequent contributor to Virginia Wildlife. Bill Neal is the assistant chief of the Commission's fish division.*



# Trout Stocking

by Larry O. Mohn



illustration by Michael Simon

## As It Should Be: A Big Secret



**W**hen are we stocking trout? For many fishermen, the thought of a freshly stocked stream, fabulous fishing, and a full creel are just too good to be true. In most cases, it is just that—a fantasy. On stocking day, traffic is snarled, your favorite pool has people standing elbow to elbow around it, the fish don't seem to bite, and tempers flare. The Game Commission's Fish Division has debated the issue of whether trout stocking dates should be announced for several years now. And, for 1987, it finally has been decided that only the week of stocking will be provided. No exact dates of stocking will be announced.

Possibly the most compelling reason for changing the announcement procedures is to improve landowner relations. Approximately two-thirds of our trout program is carried out on private land, and for years, landowners have been very generous in making their properties available to the fishing public. A review of the program over the past 10 years, however, clearly shows a trend of decreasing numbers of streams available. We have lost over one-third of those private streams stocked in 1976 and no suitable replacements have been made available. We expect more losses in 1987 unless the conflicts between fishermen and landowners can be reduced. And, if our program is restricted to public land only, the trout stocking program will be small indeed.

The large crowds and the problems they generate appear to be the major factor in the posting of private land. By not announcing the exact date of stocking, crowds will be reduced and pressure will be dispersed over a longer time period. We are certain that this will improve landowner relations.

Our change in policy was also influenced by the trout angler himself. The Commission completed a trout angler survey in 1986 and found that a majority of anglers (55%) favored unannounced stocking.

Announcing dates of stocking was originally designed to make it more fair to anglers who had to work during the week, and those who lived farthest from the stream. The survey indicated,

however, that most of these anglers preferred unannounced stockings, while those living near the stream or those able to fish without missing work, were taking the most advantage of the announcements.

Clearly the announcement policy was not accomplishing its intended purpose. It was further noted that only 8% of all trout anglers preferred fishing on the day of stocking. Not surprising when you consider the crowds. The change in our announcement procedures will also be a benefit in ways not directly related to the fishing experience. Anyone who has tried to fish on a stocking day knows of the traffic problems. This congestion presents a public safety problem on the many narrow roads paralleling our streams. In addition, traffic jams make access to streams on lakes difficult for stocking personnel and distribution of fish is often hampered. Under the present announcement policy, much more personnel is needed to direct traffic and enforce fishing regulations. With less fishermen on the stream when unannounced stocking is being done, less personnel is needed and law enforcement efforts are more efficient. An added bonus to reduced personnel demands is that stocking frequency can be increased, therefore making certain that trout will be available throughout the spring season.

The change also is designed to improve the quality of trout fishing. Certainly, fishing is more enjoyable in an uncrowded atmosphere where trout are well distributed and have had the time to adjust to stream conditions.

It would also be nice to think that you could fish your favorite stream at most anytime during the season and expect to catch fish. Most anglers would agree that this would be an ideal situation, but that it is probably an unattainable goal.

Trout fishermen have been accustomed to fishing behind the stocking truck, and many feel that most of the trout are removed within a few days of stocking. Actually, the heavy fishing pressure associated with announced stocking does result in fish being removed from the stream much too fast. That's only to be expected with

hundreds of anglers surrounding each stocking location. Trout do not have time to adjust to their new environment or to distribute throughout the stream. Our new stocking procedures, however, will correct some of these problems and hopefully make our trout program more satisfying to all involved.

**O**f course, we all know that stocking will never be completely secret. Some people will follow the truck from the hatchery; people living near the stream will be aware of stocking within a short time; and some anglers will just be fortunate enough to be fishing their favorite stream when the hatchery truck arrives. However, the fishing pressure at the time of stocking will be a fraction of its current level, and the majority of fish will have the chance to disperse.

A similar change in West Virginia a number of years ago proved to be very successful in this regard. Statewide results from this study indicated that 77% of all fish remained in the stream after two days, 53% remained after one week, and 35% remained after two weeks. The net result was that fish were almost always available in any given stream in good numbers, fishing pressure was spread over several weeks, and crowds were reduced—the exact situation most fishermen would like to see. It is not surprising that the number of days trout anglers fished jumped by 300% within a few years. Anglers were enjoying their sport more because the quality of the fishing experience had improved.

Who said dreams can't come true?

Of course, the Fish Division expects that some anglers initially will be unhappy or at least skeptical about this change. The staff, however, is confident that this change is both necessary to the future of our trout stocking program and highly desirable from a fisherman's point of view. Our only request is that you give the new program a try—we think you'll find that the "good old days," are just around the corner. □

Larry O. Mohn is a fish biologist with the Game Commission. He works out of the Staunton field office (703/885-9030).

# 1987 • Trout •

illustration by Michael Simon



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## Legend:

B—Brook Trout

R—Rainbow Trout

Bn—Brown Trout

\*—National Forest Waters

<sup>1</sup>—Brook stocked after November 1

The 1987 trout season is rapidly approaching, and with the new season will come several changes. The season will open on the third Saturday in March at 9:00 a.m., rather than the first Saturday in April at 12:00 noon as has been the case during the previous years.

This earlier opening will provide two weeks of additional trout fishing during the spring. However, two weeks will be lost at the end of the season. The season will close on February 1 rather than February 15. The earlier

closing will provide additional stocking days that will be lost due to the earlier opening.

Numbers of trout to be stocked will return to normal following the reduction experienced in 1986. As you may recall, this reduction was caused by losses experienced by two hatcheries during the November, 1985 flood. In order to provide continuous opportunities to fish for stocked trout during the spring months, several streams will be stocked weekly after opening day

through May 31st. After this date no trout will be stocked until fall.

The 1987 season will bring a return of fall stocking on a trial basis. Fall stocking was discontinued several years ago due to low, unpredictable stream flows. This fall, only those waters thought to have sufficient flows, and a few lakes will be stocked. Present plans call for trout introductions to take place in October and again in December. These dates are tentative and will be governed by rainfall and resulting streamflows. □



# Stocking Plan

	Preseason	March 23-27	Mar-Apr 30-3	April 6-10	April 13-17	April 21-25	Apr-May 28-2	May 5-9	May 12-16	May 18-22	May 25-28
<b>ALBEMARLE COUNTY</b>											
Moormans River (N.& S. Forks)	B		B			B			B		
City Water Works (Sugar Hollow)	B		B			B			B		
<b>ALLEGHANY COUNTY</b>											
Smith Creek*	B		B		B						
Jerry's Run*	R			R		R					
Clifton Forge Reservoir*	B		B		B		B		B		B
<b>AMHERST COUNTY</b>											
Pedlar River (Upper)	B,R		B,R			R					
Pedlar River (Lower)	R,Bn			R			R,Bn			R,Bn	
Piney River (S.Fork & Proper)	B				B			B			
Davis Mill Creek*	B		B			B					
Little Irish Creek*	B		B			B					
<b>AUGUSTA COUNTY</b>											
Back Creek (S.Fork & N.Fork)	R	R			R			R			
North River (Gorge)	R	R			R			R			
North River* (Upper)	B	B			B						
Falls Hollow* (Buffalo Branch)	B		B								
Braley Pond*	R		R		R		R		R		
Upper Sherando Lake*	R		R		R		R		R		
Lower Sherando Lake*	R		R		R		R		R		
Hearthstone Lake*	R		R			R			R		
Elkhorn Lake*	R	R		R		R		R		R	
Mill Creek	B		B								
<b>BATH COUNTY</b>											
Bullpasture River	R,Bn		R,Bn		B,R	R,Bn		R,Bn		R,Bn	
Jackson River (Hidden Valley)	R,Bn		R,Bn		R,Bn		R,Bn		R,Bn		R,Bn
Spring Run	B,R,Bn	B,R,Bn		B,R,Bn		B,R,Bn		B,R,Bn		B,R,Bn	
Back Creek*	B,R			R			R				
Wilson Creek*	B	B			B						
Pads Creek*	R	R			R						
Jackson River* (Route 623)	R,Bn,	R,Bn		R,Bn		R,Bn		R,Bn		R,Bn	
<b>BEDFORD COUNTY</b>											
Hunting Creek*	B			B			B				
<b>BLAND COUNTY</b>											
Wolf Creek	R,Bn		R,Bn						R		R
Laurel Fork Creek	R					R					
Lick Creek*	R			R				R			
<b>BOTETOURT COUNTY</b>											
Jennings Creek	B,R	R		R		R		R		R	
Roaring Run	R,Bn		R,Bn		R,Bn		R,Bn		R,Bn		
North Creek*	R		R		R		R		R		
Middle Creek*	R			R			R				
McFalls Creek*	R		R			R					
<b>BUCHANAN COUNTY</b>											
Dismal River	B,R		B,R			B,R				R	
<b>CARROLL COUNTY</b>											
Big Pauls Creek	B		B								
Little Reed Island Creek	R,Bn		R,Bn				R,Bn			Bn	
Stewarts Creek	B		B								
Crooked Creek	B,R,Bn			B,R,Bn		R,Bn			Bn		
Laurel Fork Creek	B				B		B				
Snake Creek (Fish-for-fun)								R,Bn			
Lovills Creek	R										
<b>CRAIG COUNTY</b>											
Potts Creek	B,R,Bn		B,R,Bn		B,R,Bn		B,R,Bn		B,R,Bn		B,R,Bn
Barbours Creek	B,Bn	B,Bn		B,Bn		B,Bn		B,Bn			
<b>DICKENSON COUNTY</b>											
Frying Pan Creek	R			R			R			R	
Russell Fork River	R,Bn				R,Bn			R,Bn			R
Pound River	R,Bn				R,Bn			R,Bn			R

	Preseason	March 23-27	Mar-Apr 30-3	April 6-10	April 13-17	April 21-25	Apr-May 28-2	May 5-9	May 12-16	May 18-22	May 25-28
<b>FLOYD COUNTY</b>											
Burkes Fork	B,Bn				B,Bn		B,Bn			Bn	
Howell Creek	B				B			B			
Little River (W. Fork)	B,R			R		R					
Laurel Fork Creek	B				B						
Mira Fork Creek	B										
Goose Creek	R,Bn		R,Bn								
Little River	R,Bn		R,Bn			R,Bn		Bn			
Little Indian Creek	R,Bn			R			R				
Rush Fork Creek	B										
<b>FRANKLIN COUNTY</b>											
Maggadee Creek	R,Bn				R,Bn						
Runnett Bag Creek	R,Bn		R,Bn				R,Bn				
<b>FREDERICK COUNTY</b>											
Back Creek	R,Bn	R,Bn			R,Bn						
Hogue Creek	R,Bn	R,Bn			R,Bn						
Cedar Creek	B,R,Bn		R,Bn			R,Bn		R,Bn			R,Bn
Paddy Run	B,Bn		B,Bn			R,Bn					
Paddy Run (F.S.)	B,Bn		B,Bn			R,Bn					
Clearbrook Lake	B,R,Bn			R,Bn			B,R,Bn		R,Bn		R,Bn
Winchester Park Lake	B,R,Bn			R,Bn			R,Bn			R,Bn	
<b>GILES COUNTY</b>											
Big Stoney Creek	B,R,Bn		B,R,Bn		B,R,Bn		B,R,Bn		R,Bn		R,Bn
Dismal Creek*	B			B		B		B			
<b>GRAYSON COUNTY</b>											
Big Wilson Creek	B,R	B,R				R					
Middle Fox Creek	B,R		R,Bn				B,R				R
Big Fox Creek	R,Bn		R,Bn					R,Bn			
Elk Creek	R,Bn			R,Bn					R,Bn	R	
Helton Creek	B								B		
Hales Lake	R				R			R			R
<b>GREENE COUNTY</b>											
Lynch River	R		R				R				
South River	B,R,Bn	B,R,Bn			R,Bn			R,Bn		R,Bn	
<b>HENRY COUNTY</b>											
Smith River (Dam)	B,R,Bn		R,Bn			R,Bn					R
Smith River (Bassett)	R			R,Bn				R,Bn			
Smith River (Koehler)	R			R,Bn				R,Bn			
<b>HIGHLAND COUNTY</b>											
Bullpasture River	B,R,Bn	R,Bn			R,Bn		R,Bn		R,Bn		R,Bn
Potomac River (S. Fork)	B,R,Bn			R,Bn			R,Bn		R,Bn		
Back Creek	B,R			R			R				
<b>LEE COUNTY</b>											
Martin's Creek	B,R,Bn		R,Bn				R				R
Powell River (N. Fork)	B,R		R				R				R
<b>MADISON COUNTY</b>											
Garth Run	R,Bn				B,R,Bn						
Hughes River	B,R	B,R			B,R			B,R			B,R
Robinson River	B,R,Bn			B,R,Bn			B,R,Bn				
Rose River	B,R			B,R			B,R				
<b>MONTGOMERY COUNTY</b>											
Craig's Creek*	R,Bn					R,Bn					
Poverty Creek*	R			R							
Roanoke River (S. Fork)	R,Bn		R,Bn				R,Bn		R,Bn		
Tom's Creek	R,Bn				R,Bn						
<b>NELSON COUNTY</b>											
Tye River	B,R,Bn			B,R,Bn		B,R,Bn			B,R,Bn		B,R,Bn
Tye River (N. Fork)	B			B		B					
S. Rockfish River	B										
Stony Creek	B		B								
<b>PAGE COUNTY</b>											
Cub Run	R,Bn	R,Bn			R,Bn				R,Bn		
Upper Passage Creek	R	R									
<b>PATRICK COUNTY</b>											
Ararat River	B,R			R,Bn			Bn				
Big Ivy Creek	B,R			B,R							
Dan River (below Powerhouse)	R,Bn				R,Bn			R,Bn			Bn
Dan River (above Powerhouse)	B		B				B				
Poorhouse Creek	B										
Rock Castle Creek	B,R		B,R								
Round Meadow Creek	B			B							
S. Mayo River (N. Fork)	R,Bn					R					
S. Mayo River (S. Fork)	B,R					R,Bn					
<b>PULASKI COUNTY</b>											
Peak Creek (W. Fork)	R,Bn				Bn						



	Preseason	March 23-27	Mar-Apr 30-3	April 6-10	April 13-17	April 21-25	Apr-May 28-2	May 5-9	May 12-16	May 18-22	May 25-28
<b>ROANOKE COUNTY</b>											
Glade Creek	R,Bn		R,Bn						Bn		
Roanoke River-Roanoke	R,Bn				R,Bn		Bn				
Roanoke River-Salem	R,Bn					R,Bn		R,Bn			
Tinker Creek	R,Bn		R,Bn						R,Bn		
<b>ROCKBRIDGE COUNTY</b>											
Irish Creek	B,R		R		R			R			
Maury River (Goshen Pass)	R,Bn	R,Bn		R,Bn		R,Bn			R,Bn		
Mill Creek	B,R,Bn	R,Bn		R,Bn		R,Bn			R,Bn		
South River	R,Bn		R,Bn		R,Bn			R,Bn			
<b>ROCKINGHAM COUNTY</b>											
Briery Branch	R			R			R				
Briery Branch Lake*	R,Bn			R,Bn			R,Bn				
Dry River	B,R	B,R,Bn			B,R,Bn						
German River	R			R			R				
Hone Quarry Lake	R,Bn			R,Bn			R,Bn				
Hone Quarry Run*	R			R			R				
Shenandoah River (N. Fork)	R,Bn			R,Bn			R,Bn		R,Bn		
Shoemaker River*	Bn										
Silver Lake	B,R,Bn		R,Bn			R,Bn					
<b>RUSSELL COUNTY</b>											
Big Cedar Creek	B,R,Bn			R,Bn		R,Bn				R	
Laurel Bed Lake <sup>1</sup>											
<b>SCOTT COUNTY</b>											
Bark Camp Lake	R							R			R
Big Stony Creek	B,R					R			R		
Little Stony Creek, Lower	B,R			B,R			B,R			R	
Little Stony Creek, Upper	B,R			B,R			B,R			R	
Stock Creek	R			R			R			R	
Straight Fork-Lower	B,R					R			R		
<b>SHENANDOAH COUNTY</b>											
Big Stony Creek	B,R,Bn		R,Bn			R,Bn		R,Bn			R,Bn
Cedar Creek	R,Bn		R,Bn			R,Bn					R
Cedar Creek (FS)	R		R								
Little Passage Creek*	R										
Mill Creek	B,R,Bn	R,Bn			R,Bn			R,Bn			
Passage Creek	B,R,Bn			R,Bn			R,Bn			R,Bn	
Peters Mill Creek*	R			R							
Tomahawk Pond*	R,Bn	R,Bn			R,Bn						
<b>SMYTH COUNTY</b>											
Comer's Creek*	R		R				R			R	
Cressy Creek*	R			R							
Dickey Creek*	R			R							
Hurricane Creek*	R		R				R			R	
S. Fork Holston River Gorge*	R,Bn	R,Bn						R,Bn			R
S. Fork Holston River (Lower)	B,R,Bn	R,Bn						B,R,Bn			R
Middle Fork Holston River	R,Bn					R,Bn			R,Bn		R
<b>TAZEWELL COUNTY</b>											
Cove Creek	B,R				B,R			B,R			R
Laurel Creek	B,R					R					
Little Tumbling Creek	B,R	B,R					R			R	
Roaring Fork	B,R					B,R			R		
Wolf Creek	R				R,Bn			R,Bn			R
<b>WASHINGTON COUNTY</b>											
Beartree Lake*	R				R				R		R
Big Brumley Creek*	B,R								B,R		
Big Tumbling Creek*	B,R			B,R				B,R		R	
Green Cove Creek	B,R							R,Bn			
Straight Branch*	R	R				R				R	
Tennessee Laurel	R,Bn	R						R,Bn			R
Valley Creek	R					R					
Whitetop Laurel-Lower	B,R,Bn		R,Bn					R,Bn			R
Whitetop Laurel-Upper	B,R,Bn	R,Bn					R,Bn				R
<b>WISE COUNTY</b>											
Burns Creek*	R					R					
Clear Creek*	R					R					
Middle Fork Powell River	B,R		B,R						B,R		R
Mountain Fork*	R					R					
<b>WYTHE COUNTY</b>											
Francis Mill Creek	B		B								
Gullion Fork Creek*	R				R						
Gullion Fork Pond*	R			R							
W. Fork Reed Creek*	R			R				R			
E. Fork Stoney Creek*	R				R						
<b>PRINCE WILLIAM &amp; STAFFORD COUNTIES</b>											
Quantico MCB	R,Bn			R,Bn			R,Bn				

# Afield and Afloat in Virginia

by Jack Randolph

This is the month when the Game Commission meets in Richmond to propose the hunting and trapping seasons for resident game and furbearers for the next two seasons. This year's meeting will be held March 19 and 20 at the Hyatt House.

Normally, the first day of this two-day meeting is devoted to hearing the proposals of the professional staff biologists and input from interested members of the public. The second day of the meeting is devoted to formulating proposed seasons, bag limits and other regulations concerning hunting and trapping. The Commission votes on proposed regulations and those accepted at this point are simply proposals. They are advertised statewide and the public is given the opportunity to write letters to the Commission, providing input concerning the proposals before the Commission meets again on May 8, 1987 to reconsider them. The May 8 meeting is, of course, a public hearing and concerned sportsmen can comment on the proposals at that time.

At the May 8 meeting the Commission can adopt or reject the proposals advanced in March. If a proposal fails to pass, the regulation concerned will remain unchanged from the previous season. No new proposals may be entertained at the May meeting. Those actions taken by the Commission at the May 8 meeting set the regulations for the next two hunting seasons for resident game and furbearers.

The Commission meets again in July to set the season for doves, woodcock, and rails which are called "webless" migratory birds and in August to set the waterfowl seasons. Both webless migratory bird and waterfowl seasons must be set within federal frameworks which are promulgated shortly before each meeting. Fish regulations are usually dealt with at the August meeting as

## From the Backcountry



proposals, which are reconsidered at the October meeting.

### Steel Shot

Last year Commission biologists, in compliance with federal guidelines, investigated the amount of lead shot ingested by waterfowl in those counties where the duck harvest equalled or exceeded 20 ducks to the square mile. If we found that the amount of lead in gizzards or tissues exceeded five percent in the birds we examined, federal law required us to implement a steel shot-only regulation in those counties beginning in the 1987-88 season. In all the counties we investigated, the amount of lead did exceed the five percent limit.

Accordingly, next season steel shot will be required in the counties of Charles City, Gloucester, James City, New Kent, and York, and in the cities of Hampton, Suffolk, Newport News, Chesapeake, Norfolk, and Virginia Beach.

In 1988-89, counties with a harvest of 15 to 20 ducks to the square mile also will be required to switch to steel shot. Only one county, Accomack, falls into this category.

Five counties, having a harvest of 10 to 15 ducks to the square mile, will

switch to steel in 1989-90. These include King William, Mathews, Middlesex, Northumberland and Westmoreland.

The season of 1990-91, according to the federal timetable, will find 11 more counties using steel shot for waterfowl. These include Chesterfield, Essex, Henrico, King George, Lancaster, Louisa, Montgomery, Northampton, Powhatan, Richmond and Surry.

Finally, according to the federal regulation, the entire state and the entire nation must switch to steel shot for waterfowl hunting starting with the season of 1991-92.

The Commission, at its meeting in Richmond, in January, voted to install steel shot no faster than required by the federal regulations. In all cases the requirement to use steel shot is limited only to waterfowl hunting.

Hopefully, ammunition dealers will commence to stock steel shot this year. With an average harvest of 20 or more ducks to the square mile, it is obvious that the counties and cities to convert to steel shot next season will need a good supply of steel. □

## An Unforgettable Hunt

by Nancy Wright Beasley

It was supposed to be cold on New Year's Day. The temperature hovered in the mid-30s. It was supposed to be overcast. The sky looked like grey soup. It was supposed to rain. It did.

But, nothing could dampen the spirits of the near 70 hunters gathered in the predawn cold waiting for daybreak and the one special hunt of the year. They had waited since New Year's Day last year for it, and that kind of anticipation cannot be thwarted easily.

While it was still pitch-black outside, a small group of hunters who are members of the Virginia Deer Hunters' Association (VDHA) began the



detailed preparations necessary for this special hunt. It had to be done with care and planning, because this was not the usual day where numerous hunters gather to stalk the elusive whitetail. This hunt was being held for disabled veterans who cannot enjoy what other deer hunters experience for a whole season.

A van from McGuire Veterans Administration Hospital in Richmond drove up to Smith's Store on Skin-quarter Road and U.S. 360 in Chesterfield County. The caravan drove down the road a few miles to Spears Hunt Club where hot coffee and doughnuts were waiting. On an open grill just outside the clubhouse, Chef Buddy Phillips was supervising the barbeque of four deer bagged on an earlier hunt. A few feet away, a wooden oar was being used to stir a pot of black-eyed peas—just the menu for New Year's luck.

While the food was cooking, a lesson in hunter safety was delivered by L.H. "Mack" McLennan, Jr., president of the Northern Neck Chapter of the Deer Hunters' Association. McLennan, a Virginia State Trooper and avid hunter, is a graduate of the Virginia Game Commission's hunter safety instructor course. Bob Duncan, assistant game division chief with the Virginia Game Commission, was also on hand to help with the deer checking.

There were experienced hunters in the audience, but there were also first-timers, some in wheelchairs and one on a gurney. They were anxious to get into the woods and the unusual pleasure of being in open spaces instead of being confined to hospital wards or inside recreational areas.

Ike Cook, a 39-year-old Viet Nam veteran who lost both legs when he stepped on a land mine in 1970, was attending the hunt for the second time. Denny Quaiff and Len Phillips, president and board member of VDHA, headquartered in Richmond, contacted Cook last year about sponsoring a hunt for veterans. Cook, a wheelchair marathoner, is employed at McGuire as a recreational therapist and was the major go-between for the veterans and the association for the hunt.

"This is a perfect opportunity to teach capabilities and limitations of wheelchairs," said Cook. "Today we want to enjoy deer hunting, come back



*Virginia Deer Hunters' Association (VDHA) member Monty Wells assists Viet Nam veteran Ike Cook on VDHA sponsored New Year's Day hunt for handicapped veterans; photo by Lynda L. Richardson.*

safely and feel satisfied in what we have done."

Ten veterans participated in this year's hunt. Originally, 14 had made plans to attend, but illness or surgery dwindled the number. There were men who had served in the Korean Conflict as well as Viet Nam, but the veteran among the veterans was 76-year-old John Gaines who had served in World War II.

About 70 deer hunters from the VDHA were on hand, each hoping to be chosen to accompany a veteran on the hunt. Two hunters were assigned to assist each handicapped hunter, some of whom carried their own weapons and ammunition. Others were provided the hunting essentials and each received a VDHA blaze orange hat before leaving for the woods.

The actual hunt took place in Chesterfield County on about 1700 acres of land especially provided for that pur-

pose by Gray Lumber Company of Waverly. Logging roads on the property make it particularly accessible for the veteran's large van that is specially equipped to transport stretcher and wheelchair patients.

It took almost an hour to disembark the vets from the van and situate them on their stands. Fifteen men on foot and 20 dogs, beagles and Walker hounds were turned loose a few minutes later to jump the deer as a light drizzle began to fall.

As the dog drivers worked the thickets, calling encouragement to their dogs, only the blaze orange hats were visible from a distance, unmistakably coming through the swamp bottoms and seeded pine thickets.

Because of inclement weather, the hunt had to be called off after an hour, even though many of the veterans were willing to brave the elements. As Jim Price, 25, who hunted from a wheelchair said, "I can get over a cold. I can't hunt but once a year."

Even after only a hour, though, five deer and two turkeys had been spotted. Only one shot had been fired by a veteran. Charles Riley, 29, who has been confined to a gurney since a three-wheel motorcycle accident several years ago, was on the first hunt of his life. He fired at a deer and apparently missed the animal. Another shot at a second deer wasn't taken because Riley saw the blaze orange of another hunter.

Even though no game was taken by the veterans, there was plenty of venison for everyone to eat. After returning to the lodge and waiting for the deer to be cut up, the men warmed themselves while "Slugger" Morrisette of Richmond plucked his guitar and sang to the audience. After all, a proper deer hunt has more than a goodly dose of comraderie. As Cook said, "If there is one thing we can give the Deer Hunter's Association today, it is friendship. We do have some limitations, but we have capabilities too. We hope to change some attitudes."

For more information about the Virginia Deer Hunters' Association, write P.O. Box 34746, Richmond, VA 23234-0746. □

Late fall comes to Virginia's Shenandoah National Park. Now in the Rapidan River, just as in many other streams across the country, an important event is taking place that will go unnoticed by all but the most keenly observant. A female brook trout heavy with eggs has located a desirable place to form a nest called a redd, a small depression in the stream bottom made by displacing gravel with her tail. As this is completed, an attending male has moved alongside her, and as she releases her cargo of eggs, the male releases a cloud of fertilizing milt. The act of spawning is completed as she covers up the redd. From this moment on, the brook trout's life is a struggle for survival.

Depending on water temperature and the amount of daily sunshine, the eggs will hatch in about 40 days, then the newly-hatched trout live off of their yolk sacs for 30 to 80 days, to emerge from the gravel as free-swimming fry. The mortality rate of these young brookies is high with as few as 20% actually reaching maturity.

*Salvelinus fontinalis* actually is not a trout, but a char, a close relative of trout. Brook trout require very cold, clean water to live in as its name *fontinalis*, "living in springs," implies. Commonly known as the Eastern brook trout, they also go by "brookies," native trout, squaretails and even by one famous angling judge as "speckled darlings." The brook trout is no doubt the most beautiful of America's freshwater fish.

The original range of the brook trout was eastern North America from the Arctic Circle, south to the mountains of Georgia.

V · I · R · G · I · N · I · A ' · S

# The Brook Trout

by Chris Baldridge  
illustration by Michael Simon

W · I · L · D · L · I · F · E

While still found in most of this area, its range has been extended by stocking to many parts of the world where favorable habitat is found. In Virginia, wild brookie populations can be found throughout the state's mountain counties, including Mount Rogers Recreational Area, the Blue Ridge Parkway and in Shenandoah National Park. In some of its Northeastern range, the squaretail also has a sea-going strain that return to their home streams to spawn (similar to salmon), commonly referred to as "salters."

Brook trout vary much in size depending primarily on the quality of the habitat and available food supply. Table fare for brookies consists mainly of aquatic insects such as mayflies,

caddis flies, and stone flies, along with true midges, scuds, crayfish, worms, minnows and even terrestrial insects. Under favorable conditions, brookies can grow to enormous size. The standing world record is 14 lbs., 8 oz., while the Virginia trout fisherman can only expect to catch fish in the five- to 12-inch size, with a 15-incher being one to brag about. It is said that the new world record is still swimming around somewhere in Labrador, Canada.

Fly-fishing for brookies rates very highly; in fact, America's fly-fishing history is centered around *fontinalis*. Many of our most famous fly patterns, such as the Grey Ghost, Supervisor and Parmachene Belle, were created for the famed waters of Maine and the Catskills of

New York. The brook trout was a favorite quarry of such men as Theodore Gordon, Winslow Homer, and Daniel Webster. To this day, fly-fishing for native brookies is considered by many to be a sport of unequalled comparison. The brook trout has also contributed a great deal to American sporting art and literature, although perhaps a little unwillingly on its own part.

Though it has an illustrious history, the future of this precious resource is not altogether bright. Miles of prime brook trout habitat are lost due to the encroachment of civilization every year. Acid rain and other forms of pollution slowly take their toll on fish populations. Clear-cutting next to streams causes them to widen and become more shallow, raising water temperatures to levels beyond the brook trout's tolerance.

The picture of brook trout survival, however, is not entirely bleak. Special regulations like those on the Rapidan River which enforce catch and release fishing, give us a good example of what quality angling can be like.

The Game Commission, working with volunteer organizations like *Trout Unlimited* is constantly rehabilitating, improving and restoring streams to produce better brook trout habitat. With proper management and conservation, the brook trout can be helped, not just to survive, but to flourish in the Old Dominion.

Without a doubt, *Salvelinus fontinalis* is a legacy we cannot afford to lose. □

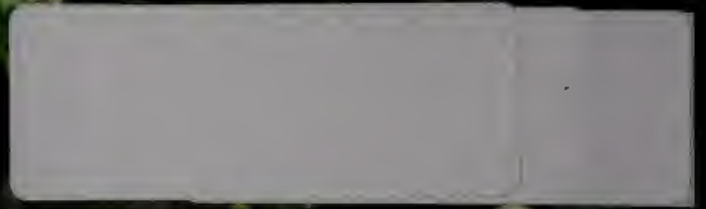
Chris Baldridge is an active member of Trout Unlimited's Capital City Chapter and an accomplished fly-fisherman.





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